



Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: April 3, 2025; Board of Supervisors Meeting
LOCATION: Okanogan Conservation District Office, Okanogan, WA and
Remotely via Microsoft Teams and Teleconference
FROM: Natalie Torres, Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

Lorah Super, Chair
Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair
Steve Colvin, Supervisor
Phil Dart, Supervisor
Edd Townsend, Supervisor
Craig Nelson, Executive Director
Becky Drenner, Finance Director
Bob Clark, Associate Supervisor
Jordana Ellis, Irrigation Lead
Terri Williams, Planner Trainer
Rosalie Powell, Communications Technician
Fellow
Shana Joy, WSCC
Ginger Wireman, DoE

Hannah Tomlinson, NRCS
Eli Loftis, Wildfire Community & Resiliency Lead
Emmy Engle, Communication & Outreach Lead
Brant Rosenthal Smith, Science Data & Mon. Coord.
Chevelle Yeckel, Water Quality & Riparian Lead
Celeste Acord, NRCS
Jack Owen, Irrigated Ag. Natural Resource Tech
Tanya Margerison, Finance Assistant
Kim Kogler, Grants & Contracts Director
Taylor George, Agriculture Planner
Emily Bustamante, Education Lead
Natalie Torres, Administrative Assistant
Sam Nurmi, Wildfire Resiliency Planner

Meeting Call to Order: Lorah Super called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. She completed a roll call of Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, staff, partners, and the public.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Agenda Approval: Phil Dart moved to approve the agenda as amended. Steve Colvin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Steve Colvin moved to approve March 6, 2025; board meeting minutes as amended. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report #863, which covers the checking account activity from March 7, 2025, to April 3, 2025, inclusive, was presented for the Board's approval. The following checks/payroll/direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:
Two direct deposit payrolls, 03/01/2025 – 03/15/2015 totaling \$36,554.85 and 03/16/2025 – 03/31/2025 totaling \$36,586.31

Checks – numbers 12680 – 12697 totaling \$53,772.46.
Electronic payments – totaling \$50,416.43.
Electronic transfer from Checking to Savings – totaling \$100,000.
Deposits totaling \$345,719.44 were made.

Becky presented Treasurer's Report #863. Steve Colvin moved to approve Treasurer's Report #863. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Phil Dart – Phil reported that spring is here. The elk are back—about 200 in the yard! Last weekend's rain was helpful. Ready to get seeds in the ground.

Steve Colvin – Steve shared that it is nice to be here. Spring has arrived, and it's a busy time!

Jerry Asmussen – Jerry announced that the word of the day is spring. It's here.

Edd Townsend – Edd mentioned he's glad it's finally spring—March was rough. He's just managed to make it up to the plateau, though there's been some damage to the winter wheat. They're the only ones using floater trucks to get through. It's still too wet to plant spring crops. The grass is just starting to wake up, and there aren't any sunflowers yet. The antelopes are beginning to move north. As for the roads, there's already been more moisture this year than all last year. What's strange, Edd said, is how well it's soaked in. Some of the usual wet spots are soggy, but not all. He expected mud holes everywhere, but it's hit-or-miss. He also noted that county roads on the higher ground have blown out, with some folks getting stranded. Up near Omak Lake, for instance, they just went ahead and put up a "Road Closed" sign.

Lorah Super – Lorah shared that the first osprey of the year flew past her window, and its nest is nearby. She reached out to a wildlife biologist friend who confirmed it's the first one he's heard of this season. She is still unclear how far they migrate. She also received notice today of her appointment to the International Joint Commission. She had applied to serve on the Osoyoos International Watershed Border Feasibility Study Working Group and was officially accepted. She mentioned she's given Eli a heads-up that she may need to step back from the Forest Health Collaborative, depending on how things develop. Lastly, Lorah announced that there's been some movement on the possibility of Twisp being annexed.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

There were no associate supervisors present.

Bob Clark – Bob shared that he's been getting things in order around the house, doing some pruning. The quails that stuck around through the winter have moved on now that their neighbor has stopped feeding them. Bob mentioned the neighbor had said he'd stop once spring arrived.

Staff Reports:

Craig reported that he has been having conversations with Senator Short. The goal is to roll the DDT project into next year. He's also been in discussions with ECY to determine whether they'll

approve our planting plan—if they don't, we won't be able to proceed. The project is currently included in the capital budget, which is considered more secure than the operator budget. During his meeting with Senator Short, she mentioned the likelihood of a special session.

Craig shared that it's been a very busy spring for the team, with numerous projects approaching completion. Efforts are underway to allocate the remaining funds, and the office has been especially active in recent weeks. No slowdown is expected in the near future.

Craig also informed the board that the contract with Hannah Poush has been finalized. He discussed the initiative to update position descriptions, aiming to ensure consistency across similar roles. In addition, conversations have begun regarding a new evaluation process. As part of this, supervisors will meet with staff to review annual work plans and establish a clear roadmap of responsibilities. This approach is intended to help staff better understand their roles and expectations. It was a productive conversation overall. Craig also held meetings with staff, followed by discussions with Lorah and Edd to review his own evaluation, board authority, and succession planning.

Jack shared that the flow meter has been ordered. Although he was recently on vacation, he is now focused on implementation tasks. He's currently preparing social media posts, helping organize physical files, and working on the Planner One modules.

Eli shared some unfortunate news—Bill 1539, which was mentioned at the last meeting, was passed by the Senate this morning, but it did not include the proposed amendment.

On a positive note, he was offered roughly \$50,000 in pass-through funds from the BLM by the Washington Resource Conservation & Development Council.

Emily shared that Envirothon is coming up on April 17th. Students will be tested on four core topics, along with one special topic, that they'll present orally. While volunteers are already lined up, board members are welcome to attend.

Emmy shared that Emily has completed the Envirothon t-shirts, with Jack assisting on various tasks. Emmy also reminded others that the Local Work Group meeting is scheduled for April 17th.

Terri shared that she has four baby lambs—and more on the way!

Brant informed the board that, although he had previously mentioned plans to travel for training, he ultimately participated virtually. He still has a few training videos to watch and plans to share a summary of the experience at next month's meeting.

Taylor shared that now that spring is here, she has completed soil samplings. Additionally, a sign design has been finalized for the VSP Work Group members.

NRCS Report

Hannah Tomlinson – Hannah announced that staffing has been capped at 165. She also shared that Sarah Troutman has stepped down as the District Conservationist (DC) and transitioned to part-time, with plans to train Hannah. Hannah confirmed she is currently serving as the standing DC.

Partner Reports

There were no other partners present.

Shana – Shana shared that on April 9th, there will be fiscal year training, which will be recorded. There's also a meeting scheduled for June 12th with the Commission and WACD, with a 50/50 split. The budget will be released and published, though they plan to verify it thoroughly.

Ginger Wireman – Ginger congratulated the staff on the 85th anniversary but also shared that, unfortunately, she would not be able to attend the Conservation Celebration due to limited travel. There are no expected staff cuts, and they now have a new water quality inspector, Amber Jackson. Ginger planned to join the OK class virtually and aimed to increase outreach regarding water banks, coordinating with everyone to find a suitable time for that. Additionally, she had been in talks with F&W and hoped to have a fair booth this year, though with budget cuts, it was uncertain whether that would be possible.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans:

ArcGIS Port-Over – Brant explained that Andrew Phay from Whatcom Conservation District has been managing ArcGIS licenses for multiple conservation districts, including Okanogan CD. However, due to a change in the NRCS/USDA Enterprise Level Agreement (ELA), the previous system of free creator licenses is no longer sustainable. Whatcom CD cannot afford to maintain these licenses for all districts, necessitating a transition.

Starting April 22, 2025, Okanogan CD will need to cover the costs of its ArcGIS/Esri licenses. The estimated total cost is \$6,860 per year, covering an AGOL Organization license (\$2,660/yr) and 11 Creator Licenses (\$700/yr each). This purchase ensures continued access to ArcGIS while also providing additional benefits such as admin management capabilities, cloud data storage, and other tools. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the ArcGIS port over and authorized Craig Nelson to sign for the purchases (licenses, taxes, etc.) needed for porting over the ArcGIS licenses. Steve Colvin second the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Okanogan Valley Chipping Events Personal; Services Contract – Rosalie reported that the district is organizing mobile chipping events in June for residents in Crumbacher, the City of Okanogan, the City of Omak, the Chilliwist, and Malott. A Request for Proposals was sent out, with submissions due by 3/28/25. Staff ranked proposals, notified the lowest responsive contractor, and began contract development. The events are expected to require approximately 56 hours of chipping, with costs not exceeding \$22,764. Phil Dart moved to approve the Personal Services Contract, with costs not to exceed \$22,764, for the Okanogan Valley Chipping Events and authorized Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the finalized contract with the chosen contractor, Fonseca Forestry. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

CTCR Chipping Events Personal Services Contract – Rosalie reported that the district is collaborating with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) in Inchelium and Keller to hold mobile chipping events in May. A Request for Proposals has been sent out, with submissions due by 3/28/25. Staff ranked proposals, selected the lowest responsive contractor, and began contract development. The three events are expected to require about 24 hours of chipping, with costs not exceeding \$5,400. Steve Colvin moved to approve the Personal Services Contract, with costs not to exceed \$5,400, for the CTCR Chipping Events and authorized Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the finalized contract with the chosen contractor, NW Fire Solutions. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Loup Loup Meadows HOA Snagging - Eli reported that the Loup Loup Meadows HOA, located within the Loup Loup State Forest, has struggled to maintain its fence after the 2015 Okanogan Complex Fire due to falling snags. This has allowed cattle from DNR grazing leases to enter wetlands in the northwest corner of the HOA.

To address this, Eli proposed a cost-share project to remove all remaining snags within a 75-foot buffer along 1.71 miles of fence. The total estimated cost is \$27,463.49, with Okanogan CD covering 75% (up to \$20,597.62) using WSCC FH funds. The work is scheduled for completion by June 30, 2025. Phil Dart moved to authorize either Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the cost-share agreement for the Loup Loup Meadows HOA Snagging Project when it becomes available. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Kennedy Defensible Space Project - Eli reported that the Kennedy property, located in the Lost River HOA northwest of Mazama, contains a dense stand of trees that pose wildfire and windfall risks to the home and nearby structures. To mitigate this risk, Eli proposed a defensible space cost-share project to remove seven high-risk trees within a 100-foot zone around the home. The total estimated cost is \$8,249.71, with Okanogan CD covering 75% (up to \$6,187.28). At least three of the trees are already dead, while the others show signs of stress from overcrowding and wind damage. Phil Dart moved to authorize Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the Kennedy Defensible Space Project landowner agreement once it is ready. Steve Colvin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

DNR/Okanogan CD Rawhide Rd Defensible Space Project – Eli shared that the Okanogan Conservation District (CD) and Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR) are proposing a collaborative effort to address defensible space challenges for property owners on Rawhide Rd, located roughly halfway between Oroville and Chesaw. Under this joint project, the Okanogan CD will oversee the implementation, with DNR Service Forestry acting as the primary contractor and billing the district under an Interlocal Agreement. The project is expected to cover at least six properties and will cost around \$55,000. This funding will allow the Okanogan CD to use most of its remaining uncommitted funds from the Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resilience Grant provided by the WSCC. Steve Colvin moved to authorize Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the Interlocal Agreement with the WA DNR Services Forestry for the Rawhide Rd Defensible Space Project once the finalized agreement is ready for signature. Edd Townsend second the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Voluntary Stewardship Program Budget Amendment – Taylor reported that the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) has a biennial operating budget of \$240,000. Of this, \$6,000 was allocated to the Planning Department for professional services during the 2023-2025 biennium but remained unused. Okanogan CD staff proposed an amendment to the Board of County Commissioners to reallocate the unused funds back to Okanogan CD for use before June 30, 2025. The amendment was approved, and Taylor is now seeking Lorah Super’s signature to finalize the process. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the amended contract and authorized Lorah Super to sign the ILA amendment for the Voluntary Stewardship Program. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Tugaw WSRRI Fencing Removal – Taylor shared that Tom Tugaw received funding through the Washington Shrub Steppe Restoration Resiliency Initiative for the removal and replacement of approximately 1 mile of fencing. Removing the damaged fence will improve wildlife mobility and eliminate a hazard for people and livestock. The new wildlife-friendly fencing will minimize the impact on wildlife crossing the fence and will allow the landowner to better rotate cattle, preventing overutilization of the land. The project is fully funded at 100% cost share by the Washington State Conservation Commission. The total project budget is \$17,171.00, and the total cost share is also \$17,171.00. The work must be completed by June 30, 2025, so time is of the essence. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the Tugaw WSRRI Fencing Removal cost share agreement. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Haeberle WSRRI Fencing Removal – Taylor shared that the lessee of the property, Haeberle Ranch, wants to remove just over one mile of damaged fencing that was burned in 2021 and now poses a hazard to people, livestock, and wildlife. Both the property owner and lessee agree on its removal to improve safety. The total cost for the fence removal is \$6,558.40, with a cost share of \$4,919.00. The project must be completed by June 30, 2025, making timely action important. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the Haeberle WSRRI Fencing Removal cost share agreement. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Legal Services Selection – Kim reported that Okanogan Conservation District is seeking legal services for water right acquisitions to support the Okanogan County Water Bank, Board of Supervisors, and staff. The selected individual or firm would assist with reviewing and drafting policies, contracts, legal opinions, and other related matters. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was publicly advertised and sent to potential firms. Two submissions were received and evaluated. Staff recommend proceeding with contract negotiations with Confluence Law, which received the highest score, averaging 90 out of 110 points. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve staff proceed with contract negotiations with Confluence Law for legal services. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

KR Creative Strategies Contracted Services for Website Accessibility Updates - Emmy reported that Okanogan CD plans to contract with KR Creative Strategies (KRCS) for a website redesign of okanogancd.org, which is currently hosted on WIX. KRCS will update the site using new WIX templates to enhance accessibility and add refreshed features and tools. The project is

expected to be completed by June 20, 2025, with an estimated cost ranging from \$4,885 to \$5,810. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the contract with KR Creative Strategies to update the district's website and meet accessibility standards and authorize Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the contract. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Water Bank Update – Craig shared negotiations are actively underway, with progress continuing.

Conservation Celebration – Emmy mentioned there are currently 90 RSVPs for the Conservation Celebration. Awards and other special items are ready to be ordered. She noted that they are still open to new ideas and is assuming board members will attend, though she is still waiting on their official RSVPs.

Strategic Plan Discussion – Craig presented the draft Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Work Plan, which is required under RCW 89.08 and must be submitted to the Washington State Conservation Commission by late May. The plan outlines confirmed and likely work for the year and, starting this year, will also serve as a basis for employee performance evaluations, making it especially important.

He is seeking two decisions: approval for staff to release the plan for public comment after final internal edits, and confirmation that the board agrees with the proposed program titles (e.g., “Water Resources,” “Forest and Wildfire”) and their order, which reflects program priorities. Phil Dart moved to authorize Craig Nelson to send the draft annual work plan out for public comment with the priority order and names of programs as listed. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Line of Credit Authorization through Wheatland Bank – Becky explained that, after reviewing upcoming project closures and current cash flow, staff determined that the advanced funding from the commission may be insufficient and burdensome to manage. As an alternative, she proposed securing a short-term line of credit (LOC) through Wheatland Bank, not to exceed \$1,000,000, to help cover approximately \$1.2 million in cost share projects and equipment purchases. The LOC would be closed once reimbursement is received from the Washington State Conservation Commission. Associated costs include a 0.25%–0.50% origination fee and a \$250 document fee. Becky requested board approval to secure the LOC, provide a list of authorized signers, and authorize her to move funds between the LOC and the district's checking account as needed. Phil Dart moved to approve the district to secure a Wheatland Bank Line of Credit not to exceed \$1,000,000.00, approved Craig Nelson, Lorah Super, Jerry Asmussen, Steve Colvin, Edd Townsend, and Phil Dart as authorized signers, and authorized Becky Drenner to move funds between the LOC and the current Wheatland checking account. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Lorah Super adjourned the meeting at 7:51 PM.

Summary of Motions

Phil Dart moved to approve the agenda as amended. Steve Colvin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Steve Colvin moved to approve March 6, 2025; board meeting minutes as amended. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Steve Colvin moved to approve Treasurer's Report #863. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

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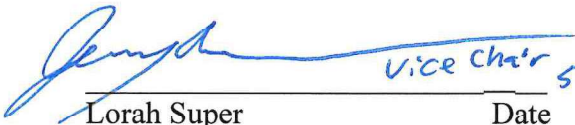
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Lorah Super
Chair
Vice Chair 5-1-25
Date


Natalie Torres
Administrative Assistant
4/29/25
Date